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Re: Senate Bill 1050 An Act Concerning Students With Dyslexia

Testimony Respectfully Submitted to the Members of our Connecticut Legislature:

My name is Paula Luxenberg. I have a CT teaching credential in elementary education and special education and taught for 10 years in the public schools. I live in Newington and I am, and have been for the last 30 years, a private educational therapist in West Hartford working with individuals who have learning problems that prevent them from reaching their potential academically. Many of these students have Dyslexia.

I am in support of Senate Bill 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia and I want to thank the education committee and this legislature for their continuing commitment to meet the needs of our Dyslexic students. Last year you made a landmark decision to change our Individual Education Plans for special education students to include the diagnosis of Dyslexia as distinct from other Specific Learning Disabilities. This was the first big step. The next step is to provide for the screening, diagnosis and teaching of our Dyslexic students.

This year's Senate Bill 1054 succeeds in making our educators and the public aware of Dyslexia and provides in service training on the foundations of our language. This will help all our students because we now know that this knowledge is important for not only children diagnosed with Dyslexia, but for most emergent readers. However, to address the unique needs of our children with Dyslexia we must go further. Studies show that individuals with Dyslexia process information differently than do non-dyslexics, If Dyslexics process information differently, than it makes sense that they would need to be taught differently and much more intensively than other children.

The good news is that we know how to teach children with Dyslexia. In fact, we have the tools to teach close to 100% of Dyslexic individuals to read. However, it takes a high degree of specialized training including a practicum supervised by mentors. In service training will provide only an overview or introduction – it will not be sufficient. To do the job we need Dyslexia Specialists who have undergone a 6th year or Masters level program and are specifically credentialed in this field.

It is hard to believe that most institutions of higher education do not already provide this training, even to our reading Specialists and special education teachers. We must change

that now. We MUST educate our elementary education teachers, our special education teachers and our reading specialists so that they can screen our children for Dyslexia and train our school psychologists so that they can diagnose Dyslexia. Further, we must create a program of intensive training for Dyslexia Specialists, both within the curriculum of higher education as an advanced certificate or endorsement program as well as within our public school system for those already credentialed teachers who work with Dyslexic students.

The cost of training teachers already in our public schools is not nearly as high as the cost of outplacing these students to specialized schools ranging in cost from \$35,000 to over \$50,000 per child per year or, even worse, the cost of not teaching our Dyslexic students at all.

Thank you for your continued support,

Paula Luxenberg